



Deprived Indifference by grayorca

Category: Castle Rock, IT

Genre: Angst, Drama

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2018-12-06 09:18:23

Updated: 2018-12-06 09:18:23

Packaged: 2019-12-12 02:46:23

Rating: K +

Chapters: 1

Words: 6,210

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: AU/Crossover. Because ignorance is bliss... to a fault.

Deprived Indifference

Disclaimer: *IT* © Stephen King. *Castle Rock* © Hulu.

Author's Notes: Another AU spinoff tendrill of *ITerations*. Very much recommended reading before going through this. Can't promise another update in the near future, but there's this much to start with. Enjoy.

Chaos reigned for some minutes, maybe an hour at most. Then Mike Hanlon got up the nerve, pulled the trigger, and sleep finally came.

...For all of a short while.

—

Finally! TooK him long enou-

...Wait.

Why... w-wHy am I still-

"You're awake."

I am? ...And I don't know that-

"You know this voice. Don't pretend different. You've done enough of that lately."

What, pretending? About... no... no, that wasn't preten-

"Open your eyes, you fool. Speak for yourself, while you can. My time is short."

But- I'm not- I'm- I was tired, su-supposed to be aslEe-

A loud metallic *clang* brought the world back into focus.

As much as it didn't.

The sound pealed off, rolling about the small, enclosed space like a

pinball gallivanting around the tray, buying time with its given momentum before gravity soon recaptured it-

Peh... pinball? The... machine, tHe game at the ar-arcade-

It rang out again, metal striking metal, and this time he flinched.

...He?

...You always call boats 'she'...

Bang!

"Get *up* , you nameless halfwit."

Ears pricked, he met the demand halfway - opening his eyes to near total darkness. It must have been dark, down here, wherever *here* was. The shadows latticing across his inert form only existed because some portable light source had been activated, invented them out of whole cloth.

...Some external light source-

Nameless .

He was, as much as he wasn't. For purposes of clarification he wasn't a 'he', as much as he was, could be, had ever been. But insofar as thinking on this plane of existence's terms went, things were typically defined, formed, able to be described.

It wasn't supposed to have a form. It was supposed to defy conventional form. Only a scant few laws governed It's very state.

First and foremost being, It was supposed to *sleep* .

He closed his eyes. The light disappeared.

Whoever was talking could *bang* all they wanted. Who cared?

He had rest to catch up on.

—

All too soon, he woke again. Not a gradual climb back to consciousness, but everything rushing back with a veritable *snap* - as stout and impactful as the punch of a bullet.

Or maybe it was the fact Hanlon had aimed for his head carrying through. The shot was a proverbial final nail in the coffin. Now he was feeling the echoes of the echoes, phantomly-transmitted pains of an injury that normally wouldn't be of any real consequence to one such as he.

The bullet left a mark, even if it wasn't visible to the naked eye.

One last agonizing moment to cap off a tumultuous parting of the ways, even as the youngest of the motley group of children sobbed, threw himself into the fray and begged for it all to just *stop* -

Bang!

The sound jerked the past tense thought aside, bringing the present back to center stage.

Along with all of the hurts contained therein.

Every wince-worthy one of them.

"Up with you, nameless. The sooner you are, the sooner I'll cease to bother you."

Bother? ...SinCe when?

The voice itself - he did not know. It was husky and masculine, nothing like anyone he had ever heard in Derry. But he recognized the wielder of it all too clearly - the grim intent and the solemn certainty. The dulled, pulsing pain seemed to redouble at the thought.

Because there were only so many who considered what It meant to be nameless.

Like waking from waking up, It started. Eyes snapping wide open, blank white orbs, only the presence of that cold, blue light from outside his immediate presence forced an adjustment.

The white orbs washed over with a myriad of colors, running the full spectrum before centering. Settling on a blueish green hue, still rimmed with an itchy, inflamed red, the irises shrank and took a proper circular shape. Dark pupils formed like dabs of ink, expanding overly round and then contracting to fit said irises.

The rest of his human guise, he was already effectively shifted into. Clothed and only somewhat unkempt, the aches seemed most concentrated in his head and chest.

Which immediately begged the question, just what was he doing, in this shape, out of all the possibles?

Fwit.

"Ow!"

Something small and stinging glanced off his head. Recoiling, defensively curling up, he instantly clapped both hands against the back of his skull. Belatedly he heard a metallic clatter of whatever had hit him bouncing off of metal, rolling along the cold, steel floor.

"Hmph. Seems Tozier was onto something there."

Him and his... daMn acorns. Never failed to inspire, the thought of beaning me with one.

But, from experience, It could tell that wasn't any acorn. The feel was totally different.

Reopening his eyes, pupils slitted, he found the bullet rolling to a near stop an arm's reach away. Instantly, impulsively, he snatched it up for a closer look. His mood sank even as his eyes confirmed it was what he thought.

A buLlet, like... just like what MikEy-

"Nameless."

Again, the smoky voice rankled him. Made his assumed skin crawl inside and out. Most reluctantly he glanced over in its direction.

Framed by a network of squared bars, Maturin stared back at him.

He would know those impassive cerulean orbs anywhere - no matter what mortal visage they had momentarily been forced unto.

" YoU. "

"Me," the older entity retorted smoothly. "It's been a while."

Not 'whiLe' enough.

Never haS been, neveR will be.

Hissing, despite how ill suited a primate's voicebox was to uttering such a sound, It drew back. Four words was all he intended to share with this supposedly-benevolent higher up of a 'sibling'.

As it turned out, there was only so far he could go.

The wall at his back stopped him.

Completely.

His mood plummeted even further. Instantly his heart leapt into a new gear and began racing. Lightheaded, he reached for the wall, dragged a flattened palm across its wet, flat surface.

WhaT? Why iS... no, this isn't tHe cistern.

He stopped, listened, heard the telltale hum beyond the wall.

And suddenly it all clicked into place.

"You- meDdliNg wReTch!"

Maturin wasn't a shifter. Like others of his pantheon, if the elder entity sought to project his presence it was usually formless, or done by means of taking a temporary vessel. Drawn up into his shell for so many eons, it wasn't any wonder at how slowly he reacted to sudden changes.

Claws out, his charge brought up short by the wall of the cage, It swung for the man's throat-

One hand seized his wrist.

The other leveled a cocked revolver between his eyes.

As suddenly as the high-pitched snarl began, it died off. Seething, eyes burning with involuntary tears, It growled, "YoU did tHis."

Unblinking, unemotive, Maturin stared back. "I did. So did you."

We're equally complicit. Now can we dispense with the hostilities?

Irises crossing, It spared the poised (not to mention ironic) gun a glare.

Maturin, wearing the face of one Dale Eustace Lacy, didn't lower it. *The man went into this prepared, that's all. I couldn't deny his logic.*

Logic? Regarding what?

"ThiS," It parroted, claws dropping slack, wrist still held in the man's hand. "CaRe to exPLain... what this iS ?"

"Settle down, you'd figure it out for yourself. ...As in, I know you already have. Your temper precedes you, as always."

ExcepT when it doesN't.

Huffing, It averted his eyes and wrenched away. The vessel didn't try to hold him in place. The slim, black digits shrunk and reformed into pale human fingers. A sulky, yet expectant quiet fell.

Eyelids clamping shut, It growled again when the lack of words became too voidlike. "What iS this, Maturin? I'm suPposEd to be aT-rest."

Amongst other things.

Level as a board, the elder entity sighed. It heard a rustle of fabric as the gun was stowed in a jacket pocket. "After all that?"

" YeS , after all tHat , as if it were ever any busiNess of yours."

"Whatever you believe, it always has, to some extent."

It's eyes burned again, reopening to glare from between the bars. To that, there wasn't anything worth saying. Nothing that could be said would change what had come to pass.

By the solemn look Maturin cast him, it was clear that knowledge ran both ways.

"Which is why... I can't let you out."

Something like a cold, spiky mass settled in It's gut. "W-whaT?"

—

You didn't say goodbye.

...You wouldn'T've wanted me to.

No, but... didn't you want to?

—

Meddler.

Maturin was many things.

Meddlesome was actually not one of them. Time and again, It had thought and fooled himself into believing so.

Go figure the one and only time the Turtle had shown It any aspect of himself in millennia was only for a few seconds, to impart a most unwelcome revelation:

"You won't sleep. You'll remain caged. Until your cycle has... reset itself."

Cycle.

The mortal word that so closely described what it was It once did.

Yes, once. Past tense.

Meeting, and later befriending, the Losers had supposedly changed all that. For the first time since inception, It curbed appetites normally

catered to with base, reckless disregard. That waking year had been equal parts wonderful and torturous. Right up to the bitter end, It fought old habits and clung stubbornly to newly acquired senses.

(Trying to have your cake and eat it, too - Ben explained that metaphor once... and then again when the first definition didn't sink in)

And now, Maturin expected him to just... reset? As if it all hadn't been worth anything?

It was something to punish him for, confining him to such a small, dark space?

Was this the Turtle's perverse idea of rehabilitation? Were a cage and a shell meant to be one and the same - riveted bars and human contours a passing substitute for sewer tunnels and disintegrated physical matter?

... *Where* was this?

The only face he could have asked left not long after he awoke. Dale Lacy - according to his mindscape - has been a momentary player in this hastily-assembled game. He held a position of some prestige, being the warden of a notorious correctional facility.

(Prison, the word you want is "prison")

On the contrary, It did not want that word. He wanted naught to do with it whatsoever. The term did not pertain to him, and if it somehow did, it shouldn't. There were only so many powers out there that (admittedly) surpassed his own.

So why was it, a shy ten minutes since the tank's hatch banged shut, he couldn't change?

Anything, about this?

Lacy had left the lights off, but it wasn't of any consequence. Even with pitiful human retinas, It could look around the dark space as clearly as a sunny day at the park. There was a ladder, a folded-up chair left leaning on the wall beside the ladder, a few kitchen pots sitting adjacent to his new enclosure, a closed padlock with a short

chain wrapped around the door's free edge -

He pries at the links and raked at the lock until his fingertips started dripping. The pain was minimal compared to the beatdown of recent past.

What was worse was the feeling of entrapped solidness, of unchanging ineptitude, he remembered suffering only a few months prior, before the fatigue got its hooks in and started dragging.

It set in as soon as Maturin was away.

...I'm wrong and I'm stuck...

Wouldn't Beverly be smirking now to see where the long-term effects had landed him?

Smirking.

For one reason... or another.

He pretended the sting of his mutilated fingertips brought reflexive tears to his eyes. The scent of coppery blood did his recall no favors. Staving off a whimper he crammed them in his mouth, leaned against the unbudging door.

There.

Now he wouldn't have to smell it.

—

Where was he, again?

The sound - the infernal hum outside the bars, barely audible through the walls of the tank - was as omnipresent as it was maddening. It was at once all around and unceasing. He couldn't press hard enough on his ears to keep it out.

Derry had nothing like it. He knew this as undoubtedly as he knew he didn't like vegetables.

(No, it didn't matter if he barely chewed twice before spitting it out. He only agreed to the experiment in the hopes Georgie would laugh at it - which, naturally, the boy did.)

It didn't take long to make up his mind on either subject.

Just like it didn't take long to conclude this noise, this force only with ears meant for it could discern, was effectively agitating.

In more ways than one.

But immutable as it proved, it at least answered the reason why he was stuck.

He was out.

Out of Derry, out of his element.

There simply couldn't be another explanation. Prior to 1989, no, he never had fancied the idea of trying to leave. Derry was *his* place, the one place for and by him, from which every thread-like facet of stringed influence could eventually be traced back to him.

Each sleep cycle started and ended in the same fashion. It made sense at the time. He was a creature of habit. There was no reason to step outside those habits, for so many decades. A being of infinite abilities, kept in check only by a select few rules.

Then, by happenstance or just dumb curiosity, he thought to try and see outside the box. Break the wheel. Ignore the painfully-thin rulebook. He could just as easily pulled Georgie Denbrough into the drain, to his death, and things would've gone on no differently.

Instead, he let go.

And that was where things started to snowball

(Snowball fights were another matter, and memory, entirely, at once pleasant and painful, the recall and the event itself)

and gather steam. An impossible, physics-defying feat - steam was heated water, snow one of its frozen forms - but as the days turned to

weeks, and things progressed heedless of anyone's doubts, the snowball grew impervious to the steam.

Until it hit a wall and broke into slushy fragments.

—

There was nothing to measure by down here.

Or there was, he just had to devise a system, something regular enough to consider constant. He racked his mind, pegged a few biological indicators as possible, but another stark realization brought that thinking up short.

Why was he wasting time trying to keep time?

He didn't need to do that.

What he needed was *out* .

Out and back to where he belonged.

The ragged tears along his fingertips and knuckles bled again as he pawed, winced, and pulled at the chain, several times over. The tears welled up again, but he wiped them away with his free hand. Crying was pointless.

Blasted human emoting. He didn't need to demonstrate how frustrating this all was.

Who was there to show the discomfort to?

Not like sitting around weeping would do the trick.

This time, the pain eventually got the better of his determination. The padlock ended up with a blotchy coat of red. All he ended up with were shredded fingertips, achy joints, and smarting nerves.

Where once he might have screeched and railed, tantrum somehow to work through the disappointments, today he coped by leaning against the wall, sliding down into a seated position. Gingerly he turned his ruined hand over for an appraising look, tendons pulled to keep the

digits at half curl. The nails were broken and jagged. Drops of blood pooled in his palm.

The tears welled up again, sliding unchecked to tickle the corners of his mouth.

Time for a new plan.

—

Dale Lacy was a tool. If not in the literal sense, whatever sweet-nothings that had been whispered in his ear were enough to guarantee occasional visits from the man.

Occasional as they were irregular.

Irregular as they were tiresome.

The chair, sometimes Lacy unfolded it and sat before the cage, smoking. A tin can appeared to hold all the spent filters. Sometimes, he brought trays with meager offerings of food - always with some mumbled nonsense about *thanks* and *needs* preceding each offering.

It stayed away. Granted, the cage's one solid wall didn't give him much room to retreat to. But it was a precious few shoulder widths worth of space to put between them.

He made the most out of every bare centimeter.

Besides the neverending religious prattle, the man reeked of cigarette smoke. He didn't know what it was to blow gently, or in a direction that wasn't right into his immediate company's face. The only time he spoke was to offer more inapplicable theories as to what his captive was, just how it was the cause of this place - Castle Rock's - misfortunes.

As much as part of him strangely wanted to rejoice, to know there was a town out there to rival his Derry in mood and setting, his immediate concern became the first almost-normal question Lacy leveled at him:

"Who are you, really?"

Almost -normal, we said.

It felt his eyes burn and gleam, narrowed to resentful slits, glaring sideways over one folded arm. Turning his nose up at the ration of bread and water, he had taken to his usual place - in the far corner. Sitting huddled up with his arms curled together atop his knees, half hidden from the broken half circle of blue light, the pose didn't communicate *any* desire to talk.

Or so It hoped.

Lacy didn't seem to have figured that out yet.

Or he was still in the process.

Yes, that last possibility was most likely.

Lacy was an ignorant pawn. He didn't know what he was asking. Just as the man had absolutely no notion what the smell of burning tobacco did to jar It's memory - for the better *and* worse.

(A crowd of spectators outside the drugstore, not one of them thinking to intervene, even as the pharmacist's daughter slammed Beverly against the bricks, and would've done worse had Robert Gray not stepped in, and it all turned out to be over some cigarettes that were indeed stolen)

Yes. Technically, this face had a name. The Losers had come to know him as another mask in It's bottomless repertoire. But they knew him well enough to be informal, and there was a time he had embraced the casual denotation with open arms.

Today, put on the spot of what name should this face be called by, he didn't feel like sharing. That fact, far as It was concerned, was privileged. His mortal jailer wasn't deserving of the knowledge.

Only the Losers knew him as Rob Gray.

That much would stay unchanged.

—

The five stages of grief: denial, anger-

GeT lost, Ben-voiCe!

Well. I see you're not through that one yet.

It seethed, uncurling his maimed fingers from where they held to the flat bars. The scabs pulled, but held without bleeding. And the mild sting flexing them provoked kept him from taking the bait again.

He didn't need this. He didn't need to start giving credence to the once-figmentary voices bandied about his mind.

Whatever length of time that had lapsed, it seemed to be getting more difficult to ignore them.

And how blasted ironic was it - the first one to speak up was (a proxy of) Ben Hanscom's?

The portly boy had certainly never been the most talkative of the bunch. Whenever he tended to speak, there was cause to listen. He was rarely without an informed decision, the sort of student who could be given a pile of textbooks to read, page for page, and he would methodically work his way through each one, in sequence.

He virtually never lost patience, either. No matter how many questions were asked of him, to the point It actually realized how much time he *had* spent, nagging with an insatiable curiosity, plying Ben for information.

This approximation, this mental imposter he evidently harbored - would it be unwise to strike up a metaphorical conversation with it?

He flexed his ruined fingers again, stretching until he heard the knuckles crack - bent over in the wrong direction. The discomfort jolted him back to focusing on the physical.

No. Giving into those pangs would only make them more intense when they inevitably resurfaced.

He had spent eons alone.

He could relearn how to do that, right?

Wasn't that why he was here?

You'Re not reaL. ...Stop lookiNg at me like that. You're noT.

His jailer had not visited in some days. The tank was silent, with the exception of the hum. It proved all too easy to close his eyes and try to focus on it, to integrate the frequency into all the ones he already knew, to try and understand how such an all-consuming phenomenon could keep him from shifting.

Opening them back up, the beyond-odd flash of bright yellow at his side made him screech piercingly and jig backwards in alarm. The cage wall banged and strained under the impacting force of his body.

Seconds later, It seethed all over again.

NoT reaL. It- it caN't be. He's... nowherE near.

Taking a page from the last time he had seen this child, he didn't cower away from the mirage of him, feeling beyond ashamed. Drawing on his formidable temper, he crossed the narrow space, brows low, shoulders up.

What he wouldn't give to be able to summon a few sharp teeth.

" *Leave.* You haVe no purpoSe here."

Just as the ability to shift had been insulated, cut off from him by the infernal hum, it seemed just the opposite went for the ability to conjure.

That had slipped out of control entirely. Or else It wouldn't have needed to resort to words.

And the apparition of seven-year-old Georgie Denbrough certainly wouldn't have sniffled, hugged himself, and went for the puppy eyes.

The move almost worked. It had to breathe deep to summon enough air to hiss, to force his way past the guilt that stole his corporeal form's needed oxygen.

"Go aWay ."

Standing just outside the bars, 'Georgie' only sniffed again and blinked, looking all the more plaintive. He kept his head tilted down, peering up through his bangs, past the edge of his rain slicker's hood.

...neEds a haircut, Bevs...

Averting his eyes, It growled, raking his damaged fingers over the bars. A half-healed nail caught on a rivet, tearing free in the process. The pain drew another hiss, and provided another convenient distraction from the unwelcome memory of Bill Denbrough.

At once his biggest critic and greatest moral ally, even if he never showed as much.

What would good old William say to -

No.

He didn't *want* to remember, remember?

The recall hurt. Physical hurts were nothing in comparison. And there were plenty of sharp, steel edges *in* here to -

"You shouldn't be in there."

Eyes narrowed, the only light in the dark, It growled and stepped away, dropping to a defensive crouch. Arms folded, he grabbed onto the folds of his shirt to keep his hands from fidgeting.

Futile as it was, to try and draw away from the thoughts given form and voice, it didn't mean he couldn't try.

Just as it meant he shouldn't answer the quavering remark.

He closed his eyes.

Go - aWaY.

"But... you won't have anyone to visit with if I do."

How just like Georgie was that?

He reopened his eyes in another glare. *I don't waNtvisitoRs.*

The boy's apparition still lingered outside the bars. Slowly, he unwound his arms to reach up and grab the metal barrier. The sadness in his expression only lessened to give way to somber concern.

"Maturin can't make me leave. It's okay if you want to talk."

Of course the Turtle couldn't force this away. The energy powering the mirage stemmed from It's own thoughts. If Maturin had any intentions whatsoever, he would probably encourage the conversation.

He kept insufferable Warden Lacy coming around, after all.

"Go... aWay."

Hands on the bars, Not-Georgie's face pinched, a flicker of determination sparking in his eyes. "But don't you want to talk?"

Growling, not liking how lessened even that noise felt compared to the usual scope of his voice, the entity didn't budge.

"It's okay, Penny. I'm not mad at you."

"You'Re not Georgie, eitHer," It spat. "You wouldn'T... know what hE is or isN't."

"No. But you do." Levelly, with a strange monotone confidence very unlike the kid being embodied, the vision held his ground. "You hope he isn't mad at you."

Almost a year of progress ruined in a few short days. Because he let the hunger and fatigue take the helm. Small wonder why that boat capsized and went down so fast.

Quietly chastised, It looked away first.

"He's not mad. You know he's not. He wasn't when you told him."

But... I didn't teLL him. He had to triCk me into talkiNg about it, after I

already told Billy I would.

Dropped the ball there, Stripes, after holding it too long. A pint-sized linebacker took you down. In sports we call that a foul.

His unfulfilled promise was just that - a joke.

Richie-voice could always be counted on to mention such things.

Some of the tension eased from It's shoulders. He shook his head to cover the motion up, continuing to avoid the other's gaze. "Go aWay. This isN't... fixing anythIng."

Fix.

Another trait he had tried to incorporate and emulate, to no avail.

For It, fixes only ever proved to be temporary, if they were attainable at all. Why bother with them here?

"Isn't that what Maturin wants, though? For you to... fix yourself?"

His idea of a fix, yes. Not as though the elder entity had stuck around long enough to explain what he meant by reset.

"You don'T know what hE wants," It grumbled, to mask the irritation. Nothing more. "I don't caRe what he wants."

Because he never cared about what you wanted, right? Never has, never will? Why start now? Either of you?

If you ask me, The Turtle's head is so far into his shell, it's sticking out from under his-

Shut UP, Richie-voice.

In spite of the conflicting emotions, It choked on a smothered giggle. Finding something to laugh at was such a welcome change from his static surroundings. He only cut the sound off at hearing Not-Georgie giggle in return.

Almost.

He almost snapped at the boy to be quiet.

With a start he realized how much he already missed the squeaky, carefree sound.

It may not be anything more than an imitation of a noise he had heard so many times before, but it felt real enough.

What was the definition of real, anyway?

—

Eventually, Warden Lacy asked again:

"Who - are you?"

Folded up in the corner behind the cage's door, It blinked against the gust of smoke, a dull, listless motion. Glancing down at the tray, he found only the typical rations of a sandwich, an apple, and a paper carton of juice.

He hadn't touched any of it before.

Regardless of what amount of time had passed, maybe he ought to start. Even if it only meant pretending, if he could stomach an orange to please Georgie, perhaps he ought to embrace his new act.

Snagging the carton in his almost-healed hand, he tore one corner off - using his teeth. Most of it poured into his mouth in one gulp. He almost balked at the tart taste, but forced himself to swallow, without shuddering.

One more way to keep Maturin's demand unsatisfied.

—

Step, turn. Step, turn. Step-

"Aghhh... why so smAll?"

Pressed against the bare steel wall, It took yet another resigned look around. Besides being unable to measure time, the only comparison

to be made about his cell was how inappropriately sized it was. There wasn't even enough room to properly pace about, to work off the restlessness. The contours of the tank outside was barely any more spacious.

Tempting as it was, to ask Lacy what this 'Voice of God' instructed him to do besides keep watch, to discern if the man had built this confined space, what was there to gain in knowing?

Rhetorical. That's what they call a rhetorical question, Pen - they're not meant to be given answers.

So whY ask? ...Was that rhetorical, StaNny?

You tell me. Sounded a lot like your first, if it was.

Sighing, another meager sound compared to the distant drip of water, underscored by the hum, he slid down to sit, limbs folded up. The cold wall felt nice against his back.

It hadn't at first. But it was preferable to the airy, isolated chill at the center of his cubicle. Standing out there in the open felt like exposure, of a kind.

Inch by inch, the certainty inside of his box seemed preferable to the void of mysteries outside.

Those he had once known and left, and those he might not ever be aware of.

Better left alone, they were.

—

Not-Georgie didn't like that mode of thinking. And the first day of it he was privy to, the ghost promptly stepped inside the bars.

"You're forgetting? On purpose?"

Blasé, It kept nibbling away on his chosen nail. Today it was the thumb. The quick had almost fully regrown. Preoccupied, he managed to ignore the other until a small, pink hand waved under

his nose.

It could almost pass for Eddie Kas... what was his last name?

Scowling, he glanced up.

On the verge of a pout, 'Georgie' looked cross. "Why're *you* trying to forget?"

What else was there to do in here?

Missing those he had known was only eating up excess energy.

"They haven't forgotten you. They're still in Derry, all of them. They'll remember."

Remember.

Sure. Remember the worst of him, no doubt. He had made damn certain of it. At the very least Beverly Marsh wouldn't forget how he said goodbye. At most, all of them would cease to think of him after passing the age of twenty.

And even if they did, it wouldn't be but a fragment of the whole picture.

Weren't they better off?

'Georgie' raised an eyebrow. "Don't you... want them to remember?"

Averting his eyes, It resumed chewing.

Rhetorical question.

A muted, impassive retort was all the answer the apparition needed.

—

More often than not, the food went untouched. Whatever he was subsisting off now certainly wasn't solid. But it wasn't the collective fears of his once custom-fit settlement, either.

Occasionally, he took the cartons of juice. Not that an excess of

speaking made him thirsty, but the cartons themselves - once emptied - could be pulled apart. It came in handy when one's nails hadn't regrown yet.

"Are you making... confetti with them?" 'Georgie' once grew brave enough to ask.

It frowned, glancing up over his pincered hands. Between them, a half-shredded not of flattened carton remained. Below that, a small pile of minced-up scraps accumulated.

Smiling timidly, 'Georgie' shuffled closer. "You could call it that, if you want."

But It didn't care to.

Confetti was a gimmick for parties, times of celebration. Multicolored bits of paper. Not blank scraps.

This was not that.

Torn into a small handful of wet, juice-stained paper, he managed to reach the cigarette can. Adding it to the smoky, moist contents effectively helped cut down on the fetid stink of so many filters. And with his never ending speechifying, Lacy never had really taken reason to notice.

The thing was in desperate need of being emptied, though.

—

His jailer was no apparition. Lacy's hair went grayer, his face became more wrinkled, his stature went soft and out of shape.

Aging. The man was aging.

So were the... those children he had once known. What did they call themselves again? Some clubhouse moniker they (by now) were (apparently) outgrowing?

Good for them. And him.

They would age, make it to adulthood. Forget him just as he said. He could forget in turn.

Forgotten things couldn't be missed.

Nor could they be criticized.

—

'Georgie' went through a bold stage, of sorts. Once, before It thought to shred the containers up, the boy spirited them away. He kicked them out of the cage, to the far side of the room.

First he found one, then a second.

Besides heaving the can up the ladder, Lacy didn't search around the tank very thoroughly.

Sheepishly, 'Georgie' unfolded and tore both containers into crude one-dimensional shapes.

It tried to doze, not listen to the delicate scritch of tearing paper.

Next he opened an eye, 'Georgie' was gone.

Two paper animals stood outside the wall of his cage. Against his better judgment, he sat up and took a closer look.

One was round, sporting four legs. The other resembled hourglass, with eight twisted-thin legs radiating off from around its middle.

Eight.

One for each leg.

...Why did that matter again?

He didn't think to swat the shapes away, or grab either one. Touching them would just feel all too real. He dragged himself to another corner to curl up, hide his face in his arms, and nap.

Out of sight, out of mind.

—

Lacy pulled a gun on him once. Maybe out of curiosity, maybe ought if foggy remembrance. Unsure of what exactly caused the suited man to do so, It froze. His hand rested on the still-unopened juice on the tray.

Dimly, he remembered hearing his jailer say something about "not having kids" and "waiting on retirement".

Total silence fell.

Slowly, It drew back, eyes never straying from the barrel of the gun.

Eventually, Lacy smiled and lowered it.

"A fool vents all his feelings," he recited, with all the usual knowingness of having studied his faith to a tee. "But a wise man holds them back."

It frowned, responding via only a slow blink.

Wise may once have been one thing he was known as.

But for keeping his moods in check, he doubted.

—

"So... What happens when you run out of things to forget?"

Dumb question, that.

Seated in the back yet again, It communicated as much with a sideways stare, then glanced upward. Nails spent, he was without a distraction from responding to such an inane query, or able to ignore the permeable silence.

Not-Georgie had taken to a new spot - sitting perched atop the cage's corner. His green boots dangled freely. Bracing his hands for balance, he twisted around to look down at him.

"You haven't forgotten me yet."

Dumb statement made for a matching set.

'Georgie' frowned. "Will I be the last to go?"

Of the memories marked September 1988 to August 1989 - possibly.

The impulse to escape was proving for naught. What was there for him to escape toward?

It didn't answer. He only hold the stare - unblinking and unmoving.

The same way he always had before.

"Why don't you talk anymore, Penny? You know Georgie has to miss you. Don't you want to practice what you might say to him, with me?"

He glanced away. Sighing through his nose, It folded his arms, closed his eyes and pretended to fall asleep.

He was tired of being asked.

At long last, 'Georgie' got the hint.

The questions stopped.

Lacy kept bringing down trays, smoking his cigarettes, and one-sidedly musing over the implications of his captive's incarceration.

Declining the food on every occasion, It didn't parley any more information than he felt like.

Which, by the end, was virtually none at all.

What was there to tell?

Nothing important and therefore worth listening to, as time had shown.

Likewise, the last time he looked up and met Dale Lacy's eyes, the man's final words were nearly the same as the first. He raised the

lantern against the cage and squinted.

"...Who were you?"

Were. Past tense.

That was worth smirking to.

"No one."

Formerly known as Rob Gray to his friends.

Whoever they were.